

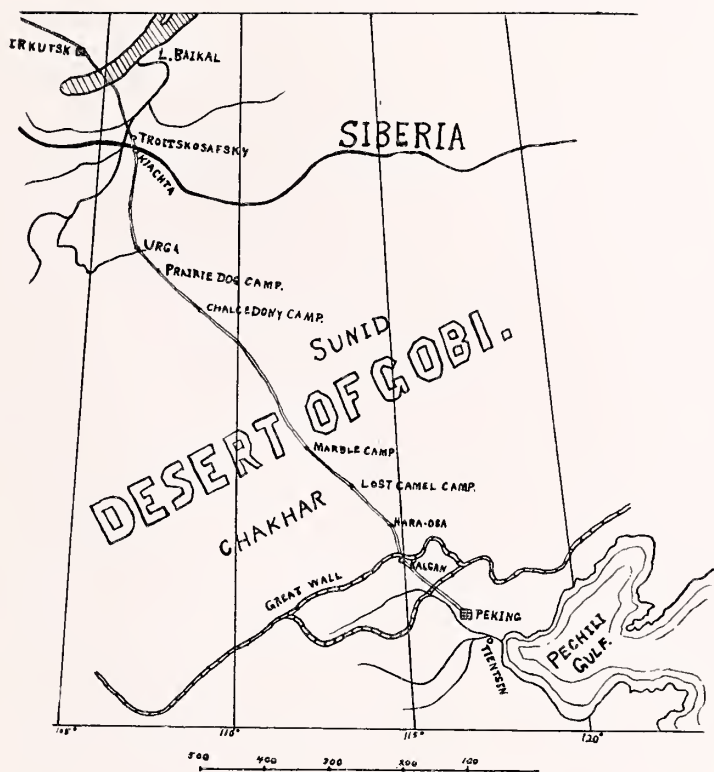
Across the Desert of Gobi.

Mark Williams.

1900



MR. AND MRS. SPRAGUE, MR. WILLIAMS, MR. ROBERTS, Missionaries of Kalgan Station.






ACROSS THE DESERT OF GOBI.

*A Narrative of an Escape during the
Boxer Uprising,
June to September, 1900*

By MARK WILLIAMS

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ACROSS THE DESERT OF GOBI.

The out-burst of the Chinese against all foreigners in June, 1900, was so sudden, that many of our missionaries in the interior were unable to escape, and were murdered. Many others were saved in ways almost miraculous. The story of the siege of Peking is still fresh in our minds. The following letters from the Rev. Mark Williams to his children describe the escape of one company of missionaries across the Desert of Gobi into Siberia.

KALGAN, May 19, 1900.

DEAR HOME FRIENDS:

I have just returned from a week's journey into Mongolia with Prof. G. F. Wright and son of Oberlin, Ohio. Crossing ranges of mountains, there was grand scenery. Were entertained at the Roman Catholic Village of Hsi Wan Tzu, where we met several Belgian priests and the bishop. A building 300 ft. long was being erected. The village has 1600 inhabitants—all Catholics. There are 400 girls in school, most of whom had been cast out at birth, but were rescued by the Catholics. When they reach the proper age, they are married to native Christians. Prof. W. is much interested in the mountain of loess here. There are four tiers of cave houses in its side, inhabited by the poor.

We hear that placards have been posted in Kalgan by the Boxers, who have come from Peking. But we don't think the people here will heed them.

TUNGCHO, May 25.

I came from Kalgan with Prof. W. who got a brick from the Great Wall to take to the United States. Fred has taken many photos of scenery.

They went on to Peking, and intend going on to Tientsin tomorrow. I am told that 70 Catholics have been killed near Pao Ting Fu.

We hear that refugees are coming into Peking, and the Boxers threaten to destroy the Chapels there.

May 30.

Boxers have destroyed a station on the railroad. Miss Gould was expecting to come to Annual meeting, but tracks are torn up. At dinner, we all hear the telegram Mr. Charles Ewing sends from Peking. News is exciting now. The Ministers told the Tsung Li Yamen that they will send to Tientsin for Marines to guard the Legations.

PEKING, June 6.

I came up from Tungcho, as Annual meeting had ended. On June 2, two English missionaries, near Tientsin, were killed. The Christians fear an attack, and are planning to come to our Chapel for protection. Mr. Pitkin has sent a messenger, and Dr. Taylor several telegrams telling of their danger at Pao Ting Fu. Trains have ceased running to Tientsin, and the mail cannot be carried to Tungcho. I fear this letter cannot reach you. Fortunately, we have two mule litters to take us to Kalgan without any delay.

KALGAN, June 11, 1900.

Traveling early and late, we made the journey from Peking to Kalgan in five days. Fearing harm, we journeyed in closed litters until out of Peking, although the heat was intense. We heard rumors of robbers in the mountainous, coal-mining districts through which we passed, and unplowed fields on every hand showed how Boxer discontent had infected even the plodding farmer classes. I remember, as we passed through a village, to have heard a

bystander mutter to his companion, "Those foreigners will be dead men in a few days." Yet we received nothing but kind treatment at the inns along the way.

Reaching Kalgan on Sunday, the tenth of June, we saw great throngs of people streaming toward our mission compound. With difficulty we made our way through the crowd at the gate, and felt that we had come at an opportune time to protect our property. We held council at once with our Chinese pastors and teachers, who were seriously alarmed at the tidings we had brought from Peking.

At dusk, there arose a hubbub and pounding of stones at our gate. The servants and helpers rushed in, crying, "Bring your guns! The Boxers are upon us!" We had a breech-loader, a magazine rifle, and a revolver. The fire-extinguisher was filled with sulphuric acid to shower on the crowd. We all felt cool enough, although we realized that an angry mob might be rushing in upon us at any moment, if the gates were broken down. At length, Mr. Sprague climbed the wall, and shouting to the crowd to disperse, fired a few blank cartridges into the air. This terrified the ignorant mob, and in a short time all were gone. We took council again, and decided that we ought to go to the Yamen, the official residence of the magistrate, and place ourselves under its protection. So we made hurried preparations. The schoolgirls and Christian women on the place were sent away to Gardener Jen's, on the other side of the river, whence they could escape unnoticed to their homes. The teacher would care for the schoolboys. The servants all bade us goodbye, and a guard of soldiers stood ready to watch the place. None of us slept, between packing and planning. We put a few necessary articles in trunks, collected bedding and clothing, and at 3 a. m. stole silently out, Mr and Mrs. Sprague, Dr. Murdock, Miss Engh, Mr. Roberts and I. We found our way across the fields, and reached the Yamen before light. After some time, the gates were opened for us, and we waited until nine o'clock for the official to come. Mr.

Sprague used this leisure time to go back to our homes. He found the coast clear, and brought back three carts loaded with boxes, bedding and food. We spent the day waiting. The mandarin was kind, sending in tea, and giving us a chance to buy food at the restaurants. He sent, too, for our banker, from whom we drew money for our journey. The mandarin told us that he could not protect us, and we must leave that night for Mongolia. We received a telegram that Tung Cho was abandoned, premises looted and college buildings burned, and that the missionaries and pupils were refugees at the Methodist compound in Peking. Many Christians killed, telegraph cut between Tientsin and Peking, and reinforcements of foreign soldiers delayed. All this was depressing. But a gong was beaten all day at Kalgan, warning any against disturbing our chapels, which was encouraging to us.

Before evening, the mandarin wanted us removed to a less public room, where our carts could be loaded without exciting so much notice. We were fearful that leaving on the evening of the Feast Day, the mob might attack us. We had a prayer-meeting together, and prayed as those who knew not but their end had come. We repeated verses and I the Traveler's Psalm, which we have so often used together:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help,
My help cometh from the Lord,
Which made heaven and earth."

The night grew late. But we knew that the danger was growing less with the lateness of the hour. At last, after midnight, the soldiers came, and our boxes and provisions were rapidly placed on the three carts. It was a mild, moonlight night, and the streets were clear. We had twelve mounted soldiers as escort. As we neared the

Great Gate, we saw about fifty armed men. We thought of Boxers, but found that they were an extra guard of soldiers to see us safely out of China. The city gate of Kalgan is a northern gate of the Great Wall, and opens out into Mongolia. The night grew cool, but we travelled rapidly. The ladies rode horseback part of the time. At seven o'clock, on the morning of June twelfth, we reached a village, and dropped on the kang at an inn to sleep, as we had been under excitement, and had had no sleep for two nights.

All through the day of June twelfth, I kept thinking of Commencement at the Western, and of my daughters' graduation. I was glad you did not know what we were going through then, to make the day less bright.

We went on to the Mongol plains, and halted at the encampment of the Lama Brothers. They entertained us, but seemed unfriendly, and wanted us to leave the next day. We began to fear that we would not be allowed to stay even in Mongolia, as they told us that the Boxers were all around. So we passed another troubled night. I could hear Roberts and Sprague whisper in the night as to their plans. It would be risky getting things from our houses in Kalgan, and traveling to and fro. If the Lama would not let us stay, we must plan to move on to Urga, first getting all the money we had in the Kalgan bank, to buy provisions for the long journey. After reaching Urga, we could telegraph to the United States for money, and perhaps go home. We saw that if we had fled without putting ourselves under the care of the Yamen, we could have had no protection whatever. Again and again that night, I thought of my wife's escape from the Indians in the outbreak of 1862.

June 15, Friday.

I have a chance to send a letter by Russian mail, as I fear you cannot receive my letters via Peking. We are waiting for a telegram from Kalgan which will throw light

on our future. We are not ready to decide to go to Urga, and hope that the situation will grow more favorable, so that we need not go.

HARA OSA, June 25.

This is a station of the Christian Alliance Mission. The Lama Brothers would not keep us, so we have joined a party of Swedish missionaries, and expect to go with them to Urga. For nine days we have waited in suspense, not knowing whether we were to go or stay. But the Mandarin tells us that we must leave at once, as Boxers are reported near. Mr. Roberts and Mr. Sprague have twice returned to Kalgan for needed money and provisions for the desert journey. They dared not go through the city gate, but climbing the mountains, crossed the Great Wall at dark, and so escaped notice. The Mandarin is still protecting our mission compound, but how long he will be able to do this, is uncertain. Our Yü Cho and Ching Kê Ta Christians are in terror, and hiding, but we have no way to help them.

By a wonderful providence, we have a caravan ready for us, one which was ordered for a Mr. Campbell, of the British Legation, who had planned to take a trip into Mongolia this summer. We realize how difficult, indeed, almost impossible, it would have been to secure enough camels and horses for the desert journey, and are very thankful. The sentiment against foreigners is rapidly growing more and more hostile, and we have to pay roundly when we do buy.

We had planned to start early, on the morning of June twenty-third, but horses were lost, and it was noon before they could be found. Then it took time to get the camels harnessed to the carts, and loads adjusted, so that the caravan did not finally set on its way until six o'clock in the evening. Imagine the sight! We had five camel carts, twelve horses, and ten baggage camels. The baby carriage trailed after a cart. Mr. Larson rode a bicycle, and Mr.

Sprague and I drove two unruly sheep. The big dog trotted along patiently, bringing up the rear. At night we pitched our tents on the grass, lighted a fire, spread oil-cloths on the ground, with each his share of bedding, and slept the "sleep of the just."

"LOST CAMEL CAMP."

June 27.

For two days we have been delayed by a stray camel, and realize the truth of Kipling's warning, "'E'll lose 'imself forever if you let 'im stray a mile." But our delay has turned out to be most fortunate, since today, messengers came galloping up, asking us to wait for Messrs. Jacobson, Sandberg, Oberg and wife of Feng Cheng. They are two days distant, and expect to join us. On Sunday, the seventeenth, they were mobbed. Their gates were burst open, and they were beaten with clubs. They ran to the Yamen, but the lady was struck down several times.

"MARBLE CAMP."

June 28.

This is a vast unworked marble quarry. We are halting here for the refugee party. We have made slow progress thus far with our straying animals, and camels not accustomed to drawing carts. But soon the caravan will get into working order.

Friday, June 29.

If you could look in on us this evening, you would see a lively gathering. Our carts and tents are arranged in the shape of a horse shoe, and the camels eighteen in number, are tied to a rope near by. You would hear Mongol, Swedish and English—Chinese is a language of the past. The Mongols are busy roping boxes to be put on camels tomorrow; the argol fire is blazing, heating pots of water for tea. Mongols often call on us and we give them tea, as hospitality requires. Whenever we eat, Mongols crowd around the tent door to watch us. The nineteen people in our party fill the tent, and it is hard to get food cooked for

so many. The little babies cry, and the older ones run around in danger of being scalded, or stepped on. Often the babies are rolled up and laid on a bed, and run great danger of being sat upon.

June 30.

At two p. m. Mr. and Mrs. Oberg, Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Sandberg came. They were welcomed as alive from the dead, after their narrow escape. We fear for the scattered missionaries all over the country. We feel that we did not leave a moment too soon, and fear that missionary work cannot be resumed for a year or two. It seems a long time since June tenth, when we reached Kalgan. We have been pilgrims, driven from one place to another, like Noah's dove. It all seems like a dream.

We now number thirty persons, (counting our seven Mongols); nineteen camels and fourteen horses, with six camel carts. I have no regular way of conveyance, but ride cart, horse, or walk. I am supposed to be sheep driver, fuel gatherer, and chaplain in turn. Mr. Larson rides a bicycle, and attracts much attention. When we reach a Mongol encampment, women come out of the tents, gay with their head ornaments of beads and silver, and gaze with loud laughter. We see Mongol women dressed like men, in heavy hide boots, galloping over the plains. They wear hats with two bands of ribbon streaming out behind. A Mongol woman's hair is arranged in two braids which are spread out on sticks, in a fan shape. It makes me think of a turkey gobbler with his wings extended.

Mongols often call upon us, and offer us a snuff bottle in place of handshaking. We politely put it to our noses and hand it back. In buying camels, Mongols put their hands in one another's sleeves, feeling the fingers to know the price offered. When a Mongol sells a horse or cow, he plucks a few hairs from the mane or tail, for good luck. It is picturesque to see a Mongol galloping over the plains, standing in his stirrups as if he were riding on the horse's

neck. It is usual to see a Mongol riding, and leading six horses, going at full speed. A Mongol walks as awkwardly as a goose, but on horseback is as graceful as the latter in the water.

Saturday night we stopped at the encampment of an old Mongol teacher, who remembered seeing us thirty years ago. He gave us milk for the children, and treated us to Mongol tea and cheese. Mongol tea is a queer beverage, a mixture of fat, salt, flour and roasted millet, with a flavor of very poor tea. Oatmeal cakes and meat form the bulk of a Mongol's meal.

We are wondering if our food will hold out. Our rice and millet, the two standbys, are fast disappearing. We kill a sheep almost daily, for thirty people eat a good deal. Our axle tree oil has leaked, so now we melt sheep's tail for oil.

DESERT OF GOBI, July 6, 1900.

Here we are in this famous region. The Chinese call this desert the "Sea of Sand," because the sand dunes are constantly moving from southwest to northeast. We celebrated the Fourth of July by passing over from the Chahar to the Sunet region, which is less under the Chinese influence. As we came into the desert we saw some very singular stone hills. The desert looks like the sea at a distance. The sun rises and sets in a haze, and is blood-red. A cloud may make a bank across the middle. We heard thunder, but no rain fell. A gust of wind blew sand like hail; I thought of sand storms in the Sahara.

We find scarcely any vegetation, yet this has been a caravan route for ages. Wells have been frequent thus far, and we camp near them. We traveled from ten-thirty a. m. until nine-thirty p. m. to reach a telegraph station. All were faint and hungry, and were glad to hear Larson's whistle as, in the dark, we neared the camp. It did not take long to hobble the horses and pitch the tents, and

soon we were standing around the bright fire, looking like gypsies as we watched the pots boiling. It was eleven o'clock before we had anything to eat.

We are glad that the telegraph poles along the way are numbered. It takes twenty-four poles for a mile, so we can reckon how far we are from Kalgan. Yesterday we traveled until midnight. The moon went down and the baggage camels got ahead, and we lost the way. We could see the Pole Star and the telegraph poles, but feared we might have passed the camp, so three pistol shots were fired, and we kept shouting. It is a strange sensation to feel that you are lost in a desert, where whitened bones of animals are strewn about. To our relief, we heard a horse galloping, and a Mongol led us to the camp where a bright fire was blazing. At three in the morning, we slept. On rising, we saw a graceful white temple of Thibetan style. It looked like a fairy palace in the desert. We often see an antelope speeding over the plain. We are now feeling the oven-like air which comes from the sun heating the sand. It is so sultry that the work of cooking is very difficult. We have appointed a committee of two men and one lady, daily to get the meals, they appointing their successors. Cooking for twenty-three is no light matter.

July 9, 1900.

We are now travelling at night as the Chinese do. It is cool for the animals, and gives them a chance to eat in the day time. Our dog barks no more! At the fairy palace he left us, tired out, although we had gone but a fourth of the way. He had barked so much that I told Mr. Larson that I, at least, wouldn't wear a hat band if the dog should die! But he was too tired to bark toward the last, so I retained no hard feelings against him. We bought two large sheep, and poor Mr. Sandberg had a hard time driving them.

Mr. Yook, the Chinese telegraph operator at Kalgan, who is just learning English, used, in his letters, to give



THE CARAVAN IN MOTION.

his regards to "the combination" meaning the company. So we laugh about our "Combination" which looks like an animal show and circus combined. Lundquist's cart door has bars, and the little boys howl inside like hyenas; the babies scream, and the camels growl. A camel, when it is angry, expresses its displeasure by sneezing on a person. All of us have a good laugh seeing Mr. Sandberg tumble off his camel. We think a Barnum might make his fortune showing off our "Combination" in the United States.

We have come to the trying part of our journey. The heat is intense and the wind hot. Now is the time to show patience and unselfishness. I am hardy, and stand the journey well, but I don't walk unless I have to, as I find that I must save my strength. Mrs. Larson is always patient with her children, who are often crying, and have the whooping-cough. As it is God's providence which has led us here, and it is His way of saving our lives, it seems ungrateful to repine at our having to go, or to endure troubles. But the hot weather and little sleep are trying. We hail a Sunday or day of rest, when we can get "slep up and et up" (as the Kentucky darkies say.)

We made an all night journey to reach a well. We find that we are followed by soldiers, who watch us when we are drawing water, lest we should put poison in the wells. It gives one an idea of the value of water to see the crowding of men and animals around a well. We passed a long train of oxcarts laden with hides and wood. Extra oxen were led to be used should any give out, which, from the number of skeletons seen, must be a common occurrence.

July 15.

After a ride of fourteen hours, we reached the telegraph station, Oude, one half of the way to Urga. We came in a rain with a strong wind. One of our camels took fright, and ran at a great rate, frightening the whole caravan. It was a ludicrous sight to watch the awkward creature, throwing out his crooked legs, with the saddle flying

to pieces. It was the leanest one in the drove, and one which we had feared would never be able to cross the desert. But it seemed to have a reservoir of vitality upon which we had not reckoned; for it ran for miles before stopping, and the Mongol on horseback soon fell behind in the unequal race.

Oude station is at the base of a mountain which is composed of layers of granite-like masonry. We saw three or four trees, the first we have seen since leaving Kalgan. Most of us called at the station. While we were there, a storm came up, which seemed about to blow down the frail building. The air was yellow with dust, and the rain beat on the iron roof, so that we found conversation difficult. The operators told us astounding news from Peking. They had heard that all the ministers, and legation officials, and the emperor himself, had been killed, but that the missionaries were safe at Shanghai.

On returning to the camp, we found that our tents had almost blown away, and that our clothes, dishes, and bedding were covered with sand. We had been in the rain all day long, and were cold and hungry. But our thankfulness for the safety of the missionaries made us notice these things little, and we sang songs for an hour, after we had had our supper. The singing, both in English and Swedish was very enthusiastic. We often tell stories and have hearty laughs. When the Swedes talk, we miss the fun, unless they translate. We shall long remember that night.

Monday, July 16.

We travelled until two a. m. We are taking long stages in order to reach wells of good water. But sometimes we camp where there is pasture, and "Morning Star," our Mongol servant, must go a mile or two for water. Our daily routine varies little. Mr. Larson sees that a fire is started, and rouses all; sets the food committee at work, cooking oatmeal, or millet; and after breakfast, has the dishes washed and packed away. It takes a long time to

load the camels, and drive the horses up to saddle them. As we start, I always repeat the Traveler's Psalm. Then the long march begins. It is a joyful sight, after a long day, to notice the carts turning in from the road to the spot where we are to camp. The driver runs along the line of camels, shouting, "Sook, Sook," and jerking their nose-ropes, which brings them all down on their knees. Then the boxes come down with a thud, and I select my mattress and oil cloth, spread them down in the tent, and am ready for supper, or bed. Each has his place, and even in the dark we can locate our own corners. At meals we spread the table cloth on the ground, and each hands the food to his neighbor. Sometimes we even imagine that we are on a picnic. We shall have many delightful recollections of our journey, notwithstanding its drawbacks. Just now, wells are not many, and the water bad, so we must travel from dark to dawn, and sleep little. When the halt is made, I drop to sleep, unless I belong to the cooking committee, or unless the "honorable gentlemen of the argol committee" are called on. Getting but two meals a day, and those at irregular hours, we learn how to be hungry and thirsty.

The camels' feet wear out, and we must patch them by sewing on a piece of leather, fastened by a thong which is drawn under the thick skin of the sole. Our horses are unshod, and stumble along, which makes it misery to ride them. The coarse sand cuts hoofs and shoe-soles. Three of our men ride camels. I think of the Magi when I see them ride by. It is so funny to see the trouble they have in making their camels kneel. They jerk the nose-rope, and cry "Sook, Sook !" until the complaining beast comes tardily down. Then they must hastily jump on, lest he should rise again before they are ready. The light men ride the horses, and in spite of care, we have to lead several which are "hors de combat" from tender feet. The camels eat onions, and their breath is disagreeable. These

are wild onions; and more plentiful than grass. Our camels have good appetites, and will eat an oilcloth as readily as choice grass.

I enclose a few verses, which I have composed as we journeyed along.

SONG OF THE URGA PILGRIM.

Farewell to the plains of the Flowery Land!
We flee from the rage of the fierce Boxer Band.
Both Yankees and Swedes form our strange Gypsy throng.
Our caravan moves, we are inching along.

Chorus:

Inching along, we are inching along,
At the pace of a snail we are inching along.
Our horses are hardy, our camels are strong,
We shall all reach Urga by inching along.

That all "lend a hand," this is well understood,
So some pick the argol, while some cook the food.
Our leader is Larson, to whom we belong,
At word of command, we keep inching along.

Constantly breathing Mongolian air,
Hunger is sauce for our plain, wholesome fare,
The cooks are the ladies, whose praises we sing,
Their mutton and millet are fit for a king.

Weary, we stretch out our limbs on the ground,
Our dreams are delightful, our slumbers profound.
But the voice of the Captain rings out clear and strong,
"Stop snoring! get up! and be inching along!"

In the Desert of Gobi are rare, precious stones,
In the Desert of Gobi are strewn camels' bones.
The sprightly chameleon glides swift from our feet,
And far in the haze bounds the antelope fleet.

At midnight, the caravan halts at the camp,
The bright blazing fire is both candle and lamp
Tired and hungry we take the late meal.
Then silently off to our couches we steal.

The things that are common all men will despise,
But these, in the desert, we most highly prize,
For water is worth more than huge bags of gold,
And argol than diamonds of value untold.

Traveling by day, or traveling by night,
Our "Great Combination" is no mean sight,
And funnier far than circus or clown,
When the camel rolls up, and Sandberg rolls down.

The "Ship of the Desert" is oft in a calm,
For slowness all vessels must yield it the palm.
With eye on the Pole Star, we cannot steer wrong,
But safe reach the harbor, by inching along.

Our horses are stolen, the camels will stray,
To mend broken cart-wheels the train must delay,
Cheered by the moonbeam's struggling light
We journey through the weary night.

The big dog is lost and the sheep are eat,
We have to patch the camels' feet,
The cocoa is out, and rice there is none,
And soon the sugar will be done.

When fainting for a drink of tea,
To quench our thirst, what joy to see
Rising above the horizon far,
The water pails, and "Morning Star!"

Daily fighting the dust and the dirt,
Yet where is the man who can keep a white shirt,
Scorched by the wind, and burnt by the sun,
Mongols we'll be when the journey is done.

Chorus:

Inching along, we are inching along,
At the pace of a snail we are inching along.
Our horses are hardy, our camels are strong,
We shall all reach Urga by inching along.

"CHALCEDONY CAMP," July 23, 1900.

We have found agates before, but are now coming into the parts where the ground is thickly sprinkled with them. Picking has been the rage for the last day or two. It is easy to fill our pockets with stones which we should have prized at Kalgan, but of course we must be content with a few only. We have named this place "Chalcedony Camp" because the ground is white with them.

Several times our horses have been without water for twenty-four and even thirty hours. Fortunately we have found pools made by recent rains, where we could camp, and forget the bad wells we had passed. Traveling one night, I had a stumbling horse. I feared to lose the caravan in the dark, and whipping did no good. Adam fell once, I fell several times, but fortunately received no harm.

July 24.

Today we saw the mountains at whose base, Cherin, the last telegraph station is situated. We had not been told that any people lived at Cherin. As we journeyed on, suddenly a picture so startling met our eyes that we all exclaimed, "How wonderful!" About half a dozen lamaseries, four stories high, with gilded spires, were seen. They were surrounded by a multitude of one story houses. All about was barrenness, and this monastery town with its red doors and white walls rose, a vivid contrast to its back ground. For miles the rocks were piled one above another in a most grotesque fashion. Buddhists choose for their temples places where there is some natural wonder as indicating Divinity. Two thousand Lamas live here.

We crossed the crater of an extinct volcano. It was a circular depression about a mile in diameter, the ledges of rock showing where the rim was.

We often shoot duck and prairie dogs. The latter are fat and chubby, like half-grown pups. They stand barking at the mouths of their holes. Lately we have killed prairie dogs to get oil for our carts. Two stray dogs joined us, and finding that they were well fed, kept with us to Uрга.

Reaching camp, the alarm was given that a dog, not belonging to our "Combination," had run away with a prairie dog.

Our Mongol driver went galloping after, and soon returned with the prize.



THE CARAVAN AT REST.

After supper we found that our adopted dogs had caught up, and had made a supper of the prairie dog, which had been rescued with such difficulty.

The weather is now hot and then cold, as if it had the ague.

URGA CONSULATE, URGU, MONGOLIA.

July 30, 1900.

At last we have reached our destination, after thirty-eight days of travel. We sent a telegram from the last station, and the Russian Consul invited all to the Consulate. So with our nineteen horses, twenty camels, twenty-three foreigners and seven Mongols, we took possession of the court and the fourteen rooms assigned us. We were treated with great hospitality.

I am sitting on the piazza, listening to the bell chiming for vespers. Before me is the broad valley of the Tola River covered with herds cropping the luxuriant grass. Beyond are mountains, mist-covered with deep green pine forests stretching down into the valleys. It is like Japan, with the deep green at the summit, and the light green of the grass beneath.

Urgu itself does not make such a pleasing impression. There are no streets, and pools of water and piles of refuse show how different barbarism is from civilization. The Mongol city of Urgu is inhabited by 10,000 Lamas. I passed the meat and horse markets. Small sheds were to be seen everywhere, under which were large prayer wheels, each revolving on an axis. People pass through these sheds in succession, each giving the wheel a whirl. Prayers are written on slips of paper wrapped around the wheel, so each revolution counts as a prayer. On almost every hill by the road side, we saw piles of stone thrown up by the Mongols as prayers to the god of the mountain. On the piles are little flags of silk, fluttering. Each flutter signifies a prayer.

We are disappointed in not receiving reliable news of affairs at Peking. All tidings are contradictory. We have

had news from Kalgan which has confirmed our fears. On Friday, the twenty-seventh, a Mongol servant of the Kalgan Russians overtook us. He said that he had left Kalgan sixteen days before. On July 11, the Boxers had destroyed all the foreign houses. The magistrate kept a guard at our premises, and had imprisoned seven persons, because they had stolen some of our goods. He had sent to Peking for five hundred soldiers, but these proved to be Boxers themselves. After freeing the prisoners, they broke into the mission compound, looted at will, and finally burned everything to the ground. The Lama's house in the Upper City where Mr. Larson lived; the Russian houses and church; our large premises, with dwelling houses, schools, church and hospital; even the firms that sold foreign goods, all were destroyed. The cathedral at Hsuen Hua shared the same fate, and three hundred Christians are reported killed. Our Christians escaped so far as we know. We have all lost many valuable articles which cannot be replaced. But we are thankful that our lives are spared. We hear that the missionaries at Moukden, Manchuria, are killed, and fear that many in the interior cannot escape. The uncertain future of our mission, and of ourselves is often in my mind. It seems very improbable that we can return to Kalgan in a month. How unlooked for are our condition and prospects ! All that is left for us now is simply to do our duty, as it is unfolded day by day.

July 31, 1900.

A gentleman handed me a letter sent from you on June 7. How fortunate that it was sent via Russia, since it stopped here because it could go no further, and so caught me.

In a few days a great Mongol festival is to be held near Urga. Several hundred thousand Mongols will be gathered here, and the Chinese official declares that he cannot be responsible for the safety of the missionaries. Five hundred Cossack soldiers are coming, and will need the rooms in the Consulate which we now occupy. So there is no rest

for the "sole of the foot." We must go on to Kiachta, two hundred and fifty miles further. It will be a journey of two weeks more. We cannot stay in Russia. Nothing is left for us now but to go home. We have no houses now, and the troubles will not soon end. We are sending a cablegram to Boston for approval and funds. As we go, each step gives us more light.

Mr. Nestigorde, the Norwegian missionary to the Urga Mongols will go with us to St. Petersburg. He speaks Russian, and will be invaluable to us as interpreter, as Mr. Larson has been in the Mongol lands. We are to leave Urga on August second, and go by stages of twenty miles daily. We are hurried off by the officials,

ON THE WAY TO KIACHTA.

August 3, 1900.

We started from the Consulate, with our baggage following on ox carts. As we passed through Urga, we saw the Russian stores and Mongol markets. A company of Lamas with high yellow hats rode by, blowing long horns. A Cossack escorted us to the outskirts of the town. The Russian Consul has shown us the greatest kindness, and we are to have the privileges of officials on our journey.

Mr. Nestigorde is an interesting man. He has been telling me some of the experiences of his six years in Urga. He has spoken with Bogda, the Living Buddha, who dwells here. The people of Urga regard Mr. Nestigorde as a great man, for the Lamas come and argue with him, and men of rank from afar call on him. Dressed as a Lama, and knowing Mongol well, he has gone into the secret places of their temples. Being a very shrewd man, he knows how to deal with the Mongols. At one time he was with a company of friends, fishing. Suddenly they saw Bogda, the Living Buddha, approaching with his retinue. Mr. Nestigorde commenced throwing the fish back into the river, saying in Mongol, "These stupid foreigners! They don't know any better." Thus Bogda thought him a worthy man.

But lately suspicions were aroused against him, and Bogda decided to test him. So he sent three men to Mr. Nestigorde at midnight to provoke him to a quarrel. Mr. Nestigorde received them kindly, and placed three cups of mare's milk before them. These they threw in his face. But instead of growing angry, he poured out more milk and took no notice of the affront. So they departed, foiled in their attempt. Bogda is a man of thirty four years, a drunkard and cruel, but sacred in the eyes of his followers. He struck a man eighty five years old with his whip, and the old man thought it an honor to receive attention from a god. One hundred and twenty men are employed by this living Buddha to find and buy curios, which he soon casts aside. If within a week no new article is brought, the men are all punished. We passed an electric motor which was going to him. A Russian once sold him a magnetic battery, and began giving him instructions as to its use. Bogda replied, "I am a god, and know all about it." But one day a horseman galloped furiously to the Russian, begging him to come at once and release the unfortunate god, who had experimented too rashly with the new toy. The Russians reap a rich harvest by selling him all kinds of rubbish at high prices.

We passed the place where the great Mongol Festival is soon to be held. Tens of thousands will gather here for wrestling, horse-racing and worship. Bogda presides over the Festival.

Monday, August 6, 1900.

We camped by a stream. Opposite us were wooded hills. The trees are pine, birch and aspen. Flowers are abundant. It is a pleasure to see pinks, asters, mourning-brides, larkspur and idelweiss again. Rhubarb we found growing wild, and we gathered it for sauce. We have seen many birds; larks, swans, geese, ducks, eagles, vultures, crows and bustards. The wooded valleys remind us of the Alleghenies. "Green pastures and still waters" are common, and delight our desert-weary souls.

Three hundred and fifty Cossacks passed us on their way to Urga. The General and his staff came up and spoke to us. We gave them three cheers, to which they responded. After the mounted soldiers, came wagons laden with food and ammunition. Two Red Cross wagons brought up the rear. One of our camels took fright, and nearly stampeded the Russian army.

Between Urga and Kiachta the road is hilly, but lies through fertile valleys. We crossed two ranges of the Altai mountains, and saw Chinese cultivating wheat and oats on the hill slopes. We find that the Chinese cash is not used in this country. Instead, bricks of tea count as money, four bricks being equivalent to a Russian rouble, or fifty cents. Half bricks of tea, and small pieces of silk constitute the smaller currency.

Saturday, August 11.

We crossed the Black and Euro Rivers, and today passed through a dense pine forest. The telegraph line had cut a wide swath, leaving valuable timber rotting on the ground. At midnight we halted on the edge of the forest and built a bonfire, throwing on pine branches which burnt like shavings. We enjoyed being among the lofty trees, and hearing the echoes.

Monday, August 13.

Yesterday was our last day of camp life, for this morning we crossed over from the Chinese into the Russian empire, and saw before us the church spires of Kiachta. We felt that we indeed had reached a "City of Refuge," and need flee from Boxers no longer. For two months we had slept on the ground and dwelt in tabernacles like the patriarchs of old. It has been forty-nine days since we commenced journeying from Hara Osa, through the wide and terrible wilderness, but the pillar of cloud has preceded us, and we have come safely to our Canaan. We have been on the edge of a typhoon all the time from Tung Cho to Kiachta, but through the goodness of God have escaped.

Mr. Nestigorde and Mr. Roberts went on before the caravan to make arrangements for our accommodation. They found a hotel which would take the whole party for \$12.50 per day. They were detained for five hours by Russian scouts on the frontier line. Special surveillance was made because of the state of war existing between Russia and China. Again, the Chinese officials would have detained us, because of our lack of Chinese passports, but the Governor of Kiachta sent and demanded us, on the ground that we had Russian passports from the Consul at Urga.

We found a telegram waiting for us giving orders for £300 to take us home. So we are really to come home,—a thing which three months ago would have seemed a wild idea. Indeed there is no alternative for us now, with our mission houses burned, our converts scattered and China in anarchy.

As we entered Kiachta, our passing created a sensation, the more so, as our coming had been heralded a month before. Ladies in fine carriages, and peasant women with shawls over their heads gazed at us, and tried to talk, but we could only reply in Chinese. We could see that we had come into a country new to us. Peasants were riding in tarantasses,—Russian vehicles made with an immense bow going from the shafts, and no seats. They drive three horses abreast, and go at full speed. The peasants wear cloth caps, calico smock frocks with belts, and trousers stuffed in their boots; while their unkempt hair and beards, coarse features and stolid expressions, show utter lack of education and refinement. The higher classes are refined, graceful and obliging. Houses are for the most part built of logs, yet hot-house plants and lace curtains in the windows show the presence of wealth. Business is flourishing, as the Czar has established stores in every town, where a great variety of things may be bought at reasonable prices. We are not yet adepts in shopping by means of signs, and



TOWN OF TROITSKOSOFSKY, SIBERIA.

Mr. Nestigorde is besieged for words. This morning Mr. Roberts went to the market place and cackled, so being able to get some eggs.

Our menu at the hotel here is as follows: At seven or eight in the morning we have brought us the samovar, which contains boiling water for tea-making, and some dry bread. The bread, both black and white, is sour, as the Russians seem to prefer it so. At noon comes soup and bread with the merest morsel of vegetable added at our request. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the samovar and tea-cakes make their appearance, and at nine in the evening we have a meat dinner. We petitioned that dinner might come at seven, but no, habits are as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians.

August 20, 1900.

Thirty-four years ago today, I landed at Tientsin, and now I leave China for home. We are at Troitskosafsky, about two miles north of Kiachta, and expect to remain about two weeks, while our caravan is being sold off, and preparations are made for our journey to St. Petersburg.

This morning I went to the market and saw carts filled with potatoes, onions, cabbage, parsnips and huckleberries. John Chinaman was there, selling odds and ends. I was glad to find some one to whom I could speak. It seems that all the Chinese from Siberia are flocking homeward. The market women wore bright handkerchiefs on their heads, and dresses fastened with suspenders over the shoulders. Some wore boots. The men look as though the barber could improve their appearance. We saw the huge loaves of dark, sour, rye bread, and tubs of boiled milk out for sale. The milk-tubs are small cylindrical pails of birch bark.

A detachment of Cossacks, clad in white, rode through the streets, singing and carrying different parts. It was inspiring. At night the band performed in the park, and soldiers sang and danced. The officers had a table with liquors and the ladies (?) sat drinking and smoking with

them. I have seen drunken men, a sight which we never see in China, showing that we have come to Russian civilization! Yet on the other hand, we see many school houses and churches. I notice fire-engines in the streets and ladders by every house, for as the buildings are mostly of wood, great care must be taken. The costumes of the peasants are peculiar. The women wear furniture calico dresses, with heavy shoes, and shawls over their heads. The boys invariably have their trousers tucked in their boots and wear the shirt, belt and cloth cap. I remember fifty or sixty years ago, boys had the same style of caps, and wore their trousers tucked in their boots. So Russia may be only a half century behind the times.

We heard telegrams, two days old, saying that the Chinese had been defeated near Peking, and that foreigners are still besieged in the city. I hope they may be soon delivered. Our way of escape was easier than their imprisonment. We hear that forty thousand German and Russian soldiers have passed through Irkoutsk. There, the Chinese stores are plundered, and Chinese are fleeing for their lives homeward. It seems strange that we are fleeing for our lives in the opposite direction. Each family of Russians here has several Cossacks quartered in the house. This is one of the inconveniences of living under a despotic government.

August 24.

I went to the Greek church services, and was captivated by the choir. The priest who read the service had a voice like a "Bull of Bashan." There were grand bass voices among the singers. As I listened to the harmonies, I thought of the music of heaven.

Mrs. Soderbom's baby died, and was buried in the cemetery here. I offered prayer and read from the Bible, and we all helped to get a little stone for the grave. The baby had a hard time in the desert, being sick with the whooping-cough and lacking good milk.

The Russians here have been very kind to us. The wife of the banker, on hearing that the Swedes were penniless, offered them free passage to Irkoutsk, but their money has finally come, so they will not be obliged to avail themselves of the offer. She has invited the whole party to dinner, given them the use of her luxurious Russian bath, and sent carriages to take the ladies to church. Truly Russian hospitality is unbounded.

August 27.

We read the papers eagerly to find news about China. All seems to be in confusion there. We have eight tarantasses engaged to take us the five days journey to Lake Baikal, where we may get steamer to Irkoutsk. From there we go via the Trans-Siberian Railway. We started late in the afternoon.

The three horses abreast of each tarantass galloped along at a furious pace. I had a feeling of exhilaration in the thought that I was on my way home, and would soon be there, now that the time of rapid travel had begun, by tarantass, steamer, and car. Late at night, we came to the post station. The agent told us we could not be entertained, but a letter of permit, shown by Mr. Nestigorde, silenced him. We were admitted, and given two rooms, where we slept on the floor. Our mixed company made the rooms look like Castle Garden, where the emigrants sit and jabber as they land from the ships.

Coming to the Selinga River, we crossed on a ferry. About seventy five miles from here are the graves of the wives of Stallybrass and Swan, missionaries to the Buriats from 1817 to 1841, when they were expelled by the Russians. Mr. Gilmour visited here in 1870. Nothing remains of their work except their translation of the Bible into Mongol. The Greek church claims the Buriats, but many are heathen, for we see temples, and pieces of cloth tied, as prayers, to the branches of trees. We stopped at a Buriat house. Although made of wood, it was like a Mongol tent in that the fire was built in the center of the room, and let out its smoke through a hole in the roof.

We came to a station situated in a romantic spot on the banks of a stream, surrounded by an amphitheater of pine-clad hills. Our drivers have the horses gallop up hills and down. We climbed a mountain range covered with dense forests. The saplings made a jungle where berries and flowers could be found in plenty. At the summit of the mountain, we found a signal station, where the Customs officers examined our baggage. They were puzzled over our Gobi agates. We were now eight thousand feet above sea level, and it took us five hours to make the steep descent to Lake Baikal. It was beautiful to look down the ravines and see the dark pines and the scarlet berries of the mountain ash. We could see snow on distant mountains, although it was still August. We had trouble with our knavish tarantass driver, and had to apply to the police, but with such an interpreter as Mr. Nestigorde, who is as ready for fight as any of his Viking ancestors, we easily came out victorious.

September 1, 1900.

We have now been almost three months on the go, and have finished the stage of quadruped transportation. We bid farewell to horse and camel, and welcome the more rapid service of steam. As we took passage on Lake Baikal we saw the landing of thirteen hundred young and hardy-looking conscripts, the flower of the Russian people, who are on their way East. They seemed to be conscripts, hastily collected, as many had no uniforms or guns, and some wore common straw hats.

Our passage by steamer over Lake Baikal took only a few hours. Finding at Barachig that there was no train for Irkoutsk and no hotel in the place, our whole party renewed its desert experience by camping out on the station platform.

Our stay in Irkoutsk was busied with arrangements for our journey over the Trans-Siberian Railway to St. Petersburg. By the so-called Diminution System, a certain reduc-

tion of fare is given proportionate to the distance traveled. So we found that for twenty dollars each we could get second-class tickets for the whole distance of over five thousand miles. Our party occupies an entire car. This is divided into sections, each of which has four berths. The third class is as crowded as the steerage of a vessel, and many are without berths. As second-class passengers, we are entitled to forty pounds of baggage free, but all excess must be paid for at the rate of seven roubles for forty pounds.

The train moves very slowly, and stops at stations to let the passengers get boiling water at the tea houses. The Russian word for "hurry," is "scurry," which is very expressive, and takes the place of the familiar "All aboard!" of America.

Pine wood is so plentiful as to be burnt by the locomotives, and we are not troubled by cinders. Log-pens along the road are heaped with loose brush, so that sparks may not set the woods on fire. Moveable fences are stacked together for use when snowdrifts come. We passed through mining districts where gnats abounded, and the workmen had their faces covered with veils. Workmen lack the ambition they have in America. Convicts are brought out in great numbers, but many work their way back along the railroad. Drunkenness brings almost universal poverty. Although many a village may get ten thousand rubles a year simply through the sale of sable skins, yet people remain poor. Men smoke and let the women do the hard work.

We passed over steppes perfectly level, with woods and broad fields. On the twelfth of September, we crossed the Ural mountains, and saw the monument that marks the boundary line between Europe and Asia. A vast bridge stretches across the Volga, which is said to be the largest river in Europe. We are interested in seeing the life of the people in these various districts. At Ofa, there have been famines for the last few years. So, both on account of the scarcity of food, and because of the cold, the people hibernate in the winter, sleeping on their stoves, and wak-

ing up to drink hot water, or eat a little from time to time.

It is impossible to speak too highly of the kindness of the Russian officials all along the way. Although the Trans-Siberian road was at this time closed to civilians, and choked with troops bound for the East, yet a special car was always reserved for us by the authorities. In Moscow and St. Petersburg the greatest consideration and hospitality were shown us. At Moscow, a party of young American tourists took up a subscription to enable us to take a special car on the fast train to St. Petersburg. Reaching that city on the eighteenth of September, we were most cordially received by the Hon. Mr. Pearce, in the absence of our American ambassador, Charlemagne Tower. Proceeding thence to Berlin and London, we sailed from Glasgow on the "City of Rome," and landed in New York on the eighth of October. Reaching St. Louis on the 10th, in time to attend the annual meeting of the American Board, we met our Peking friends, from whom we had parted four months before, little dreaming of the thrilling experiences we were to pass through. They told us of their miraculous preservation during the siege. Hanging on the wall was the roll of martyred missionaries.

We remembered that our names might have appeared with theirs, but for the special providence of God.

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